

Background

- Statistics Canada conducts the Census of Population every five years. For 2016, Statistics Canada reinstated the mandatory long-form census—which was replaced by the voluntary National Household Survey in 2011. Historically, one in five households (20%) received the long-form census. In 2016, the sample size for the long-form census increased to one in four households (25%). All other households received a short-form questionnaire.
- The reference date for the 2016 Census was May 10, 2016. Households received a letter with a 16-digit access code allowing them to complete the census online. They were also provided with the option of having a paper version mailed to them. Completion of the long and short questionnaire was required by law.
- The short form consisted of 10 questions covering basic demographic characteristics including age, sex, marital status, family relationships and language. The long form contained the 10 questions as well as questions on social and economic characteristics such as education level, labour force activity, immigrant status and dwelling condition. Questions on income were not asked; information was obtained from personal income tax and benefits records from the Canada Revenue Agency.
- Preliminary figures show high response rates for the completion of the census questionnaires. Overall, 98.4% of households in Canada and 98.3% of households in New Brunswick participated in the 2016 Census of Population.
- Results from the 2016 Census will be released six months earlier than in 2011, with the final release scheduled for November 29, 2017.
- Census results are used to create statistical profiles of the population and communities, and are vital for planning services and program delivery such as schools, housing, roads, daycares and fire protection. In addition, funding formulas for major federal transfer payments to the province rely on population counts. Every person not counted results in lost dollars to the province and therefore lower funding for essential programs.
- With the restoration of the long-form census, data quality and the availability of community-level information should be improved. However, there could be challenges with trend analysis and historical comparability for some variables.
- The Census counts are the starting base for the annual population estimates. Over the next year and a half, Statistics Canada will conduct coverage studies of the 2016 Census in order to estimate the missed population. In the fall of 2018, the current population estimates will be revised to reflect the 2016 Census counts adjusted by the net undercoverage count. These estimates will be used for purposes of major federal transfers.